

# DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Monday, May 7, 2001

## Paul Curtis Receives Award

*By Richard Anderson*

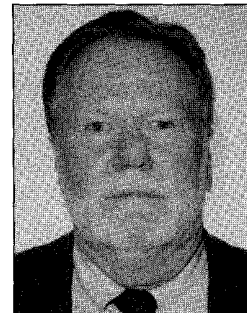
We thought you'd all enjoy hearing about an award that Paul Curtis recently received, so please read the following article. We'd like to join in honoring him for his efforts and achievements.

*At the 13th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, April 23-28, 2001 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Paul Curtis was awarded the "Commissioner's Award" for the State of Utah. This Award recognizes those who have made outstanding contributions toward the prevention, intervention, and treatment of child abuse and neglect. The theme of this year's conference, "Faces of Change: Embracing Diverse Cultures and Alternative Approaches," proclaims exactly what Commissioner's Award honorees are doing every day: recognizing that our diversity allows us to bring a multitude of approaches to bear on key issues in the field of child abuse and neglect. Their work, while at times frustrating and disheartening, can also be rewarding, and it is vital to easing the plight of so many children and families. I salute their dedication and would like to assure them that they are making a difference. (James A. Harrell, Acting Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services)*

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### **Paul Johnson Curtis, M.S.W.**

Director - Western Region  
Utah's Division of Child and Family Services  
150 East Center Street, Suite 5100, Provo, Utah



Paul Johnson Curtis has practiced in community social services, youth services, and child welfare services for nearly forty years. During this period, he has developed a finely honed personal sense of which service delivery approaches will work and which will not. His personal and professional orientation toward child welfare practice reflects all that has been learned nationally over the past 30 years: assuring child safety is paramount; engaging the parent in a helping relationship increases safety; and empowering parents with alternatives, choices, and options helps them to make good decisions.

With this personal orientation, it is not surprising that Mr. Curtis was an early proponent of family-centered practice, basing child welfare staff in the schools, family support centers, family group conferencing, and multiple track responses to allegations of child maltreatment. His strong orientation to prevention and early intervention means that the communities and neighborhoods under his administration have flourished as safe havens for all children and families, particularly those who have come to the attention of the public child welfare agency. The outcomes achieved by Mr. Curtis' leadership reflect high rates of safety through early intervention, low rates of recurrence of maltreatment after intervention, and exceptionally low rates of use of out-of-home care. The outcomes have been achieved in a service area serving over 400,000 Utah residents.

Despite his strong sense of what works, he does not claim or assert privilege that comes from possessing age or experience. He interacts with each community partner with integrity and respect. He listens to their ideas and reflects back their fears and concerns. His successes as a leader stem from being a collaborator, and the communities he serves have a wider array of resources as a result of Mr. Curtis' ability to team well with others.

Mr. Curtis serves as a mentor to young child welfare social workers. His model of social work practices and values in dealing with others has launched and sustained many productive careers. People have stayed in the difficult practice of public child welfare as a result of his example and leadership.

Mr. Curtis has worked for the Utah Department of Human Services for 19 years, the last six of which as the Regional Director for the Western Region. He is involved with many community groups, including the School of Social Work Advisory Council at Brigham Young University and the Children's Justice Center Board.